20 YEARS OF IDW

ISSUE 1

GHOST TREE

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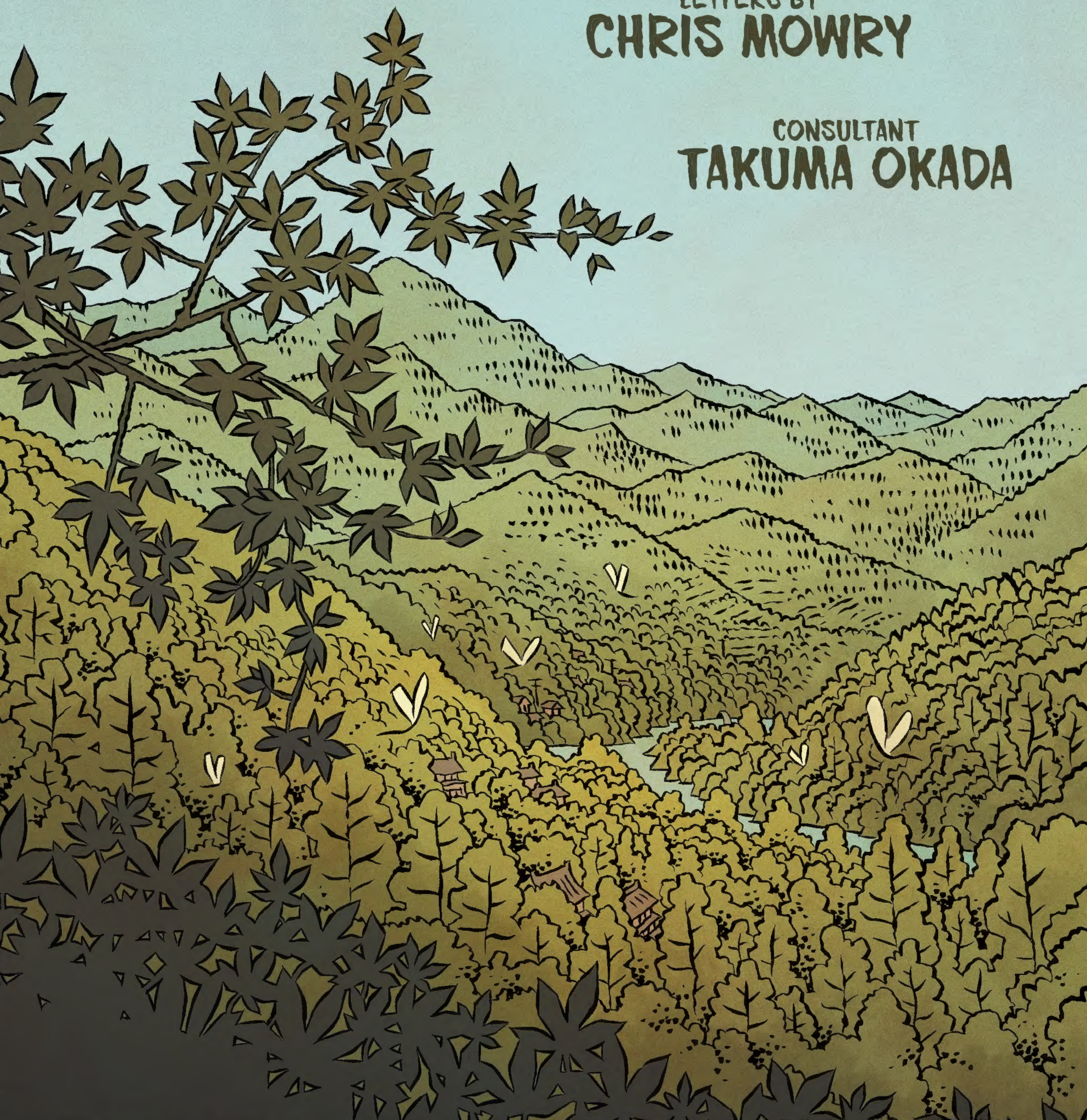

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I'VE GOT YOU! YOU'RE SAFE HERE!

THE MIND MELDERS WILL BE HERE SOON! WE'VE GOT TO PROTECT THE CRYSTALS!

YARRG! THE MIND MELDERS HAVE MY MIND!

I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM!!

MUST-- MUST REGAIN CONTROL OF MY MIND!!

HA HA!

I KNOW WHERE WE NEED TO GO!

IT'S TIME TO BLAST OFF! THE MIND MELDERS CAN'T FOLLOW US... INTO SPACE!

ONCE WE'RE THERE WE CAN— OJII-CHAN?

OJII-CHAN, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

OJII-CHAN? GRANDFATHER?

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT FOLLOW ME.

I DID THE SAME AT YOUR AGE. CURIOUS MINDS THINK ALIKE.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS FOREST. YOU FEEL IT?

DANCING IN THE AIR.

IT'S GOOD TO BE INQUISITIVE, BRANDT.

ESPECIALLY AT YOUR AGE.

MY AGE... IT CAN CAUSE TROUBLE.

bzzzzz

QUIET HERE, ISN'T IT?

YES.

I WANT YOU TO PROMISE ME TWO THINGS, BRANDT.

WILL YOU PROMISE ME TWO THINGS?

OKAY, OJII-CHAN.

THE FIRST. PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL CHERISH YOUR CHILDHOOD. THOSE WILL BE YOUR LONGEST MEMORIES, BRANDT.

OKAY... I WILL.

THE OTHER PROMISE.

I WANT YOU TO MEET ME HERE, UNDER THIS TREE, TEN YEARS AFTER I DIE.

CAN YOU PROMISE ME THAT, BRANDT?

I PROMISE.

American

NUTS

NUTS

NUTS

NUTS

NUTS

BRANDT!

HEY, MARIKO.

LONG TIME NO SEE, COUSIN.

WOW, LOOK AT THIS GUY. CONGRATULATIONS.

SAVE THAT FOR WHEN HE'S POTTY TRAINED, PLEASE.

SO YOU'VE BEEN KINDA TIGHTLIPPED ABOUT WHY YOU'RE OUT HERE, BRANDT.

OH, YOU KNOW. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I'VE BEEN BACK. BAA-CHAN IS GETTING OLDER.

I JUST WANTED TO SEE EVERYTHING AGAIN.

YOU MISS IT?

IT'S STRANGE. I SPENT SO MUCH TIME HERE, DURING SUMMERS. BUT EVERYTHING STILL FEELS... DIFFERENT. MORE REAL, BUT... NOT.

HARD TO EXPLAIN.

SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF MY DAD HAD STAYED HERE. MARRIED A JAPANESE WOMAN. I'D HAVE GROWN UP HERE.

THAT WAS NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN. DAD ALWAYS SAID, "YOUR UNCLE NAKSI HAS ADVENTURE IN HIS BLOOD." DROVE MY DAD CRAZY.

HEH. YEAH.

SO...

HOW'S ALICE?

SHE'S GOOD.

HERE TO RUN AWAY FROM YOUR PROBLEMS THEN?

YES. ABSOLUTELY, YES.

YOU ARE LATE.

BAA-CHAN! IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU.

DON'T GET CLINGY.

OH... SORRY.

DINNER IS SET.

WHERE IS YOUR WIFE?

I TOLD YOU BAA-CHAN, SHE'S NOT COMING ON THIS TRIP. JUST ME.

THAT IS NOT GOOD. A WIFE SHOULD BE WITH HER HUSBAND, UNLESS IT IS A BUSINESS TRIP.

IS THIS A BUSINESS TRIP, BRANDT?

NO, BAA-CHAN.

THEN YOUR WIFE SHOULD BE WITH YOU.

I'LL BE SURE TO TELL HER THAT.

A MAN WITHOUT A WOMAN IS A MAN WITHOUT HOME, WITHOUT PURPOSE.

NEVER FORGET THIS, BRANDT.

OBAA-CHAN, ARE YOU SAYING YOU AND OJII-CHAN NEVER WANTED A LITTLE TIME APART??

NO.

"NO," YOU NEVER WANTED TIME APART, OR "NO," YOU'RE NOT SAYING THAT?

NO!

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT. HE WAS... OJII-CHAN. AND YOU'RE TOO STRONG WILLED NOT TO HAVE HAD ARGUMENTS WITH A MAN LIKE THAT.

WE MAY HAVE HAD... PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. BUT WE ALWAYS RESPECTED EACH OTHER.

WE NEVER WANTED TO BE APART FROM EACH OTHER.

MARRIAGE CAN BE HARD, BUT IT IS AN HONOR. IT IS SACRED.

YOU MUST FIGHT FOR IT.

EXCUSE ME. JUST... GOING TO GET SOME AIR.

FINISH YOUR FOOD.

EXCUSE ME. JUST... JET LAG. GOING OUTSIDE.

DON'T LOOK AT ME.

PPPBLBBLTT

BRANDT! WHERE ARE YOU?

ARAMI.

I'M TRYING TO MAKE IT WORK WITH ALICE, BAA-CHAN.

YOUR GRANDFATHER. HE COULD BE DIFFICULT AT TIMES.

IT IS GOOD THAT YOU TRY.

YOU CAME.

I THOUGHT YOU MAY HAVE FORGOT.

OJII-CHAN..?

I... I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN.

OF COURSE! I TOLD YOU TO COME HERE.

WHEN?

WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD. SIX OR SEVEN?

I DON'T THINK I REMEMBER THAT.

OF COURSE YOU DO. I TOLD YOU TO MEET ME HERE TEN YEARS AFTER I DIED.

YOU DON'T REMEMBER?

CAN YOU SEE THEM, BRANDT?

NO.

ONE DAY YOU WILL. WHEN YOU ARE OLDER.

NLERT

AH!

NLERT NLERT

WHAT-- WHAT IS THAT?

TREE KAMI. HE'S FINE.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE, JII-CHAN?

A GHOST TREE. A PLACE THAT GHOSTS ARE DRAWN TO.

SOME MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILY CAN SEE THEM, TALK TO THEM. USUALLY ONLY ONE IN A GENERATION, THOUGH NOT ALWAYS.

IT'S BEEN THAT WAY AS LONG AS OUR FAMILY HAS LIVED HERE. WHICH HAS BEEN MANY, MANY YEARS.

NO ONE HAS EVER KNOWN WHY.

YOU... NEVER SHOULD HAVE COME BACK HERE.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID THAT YOU TOLD ME TO—

I DIDN'T KNOW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW.

BACK THEN, I THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING HERE FOR OUR FAMILY.

I KNOW NOW THAT I WAS WRONG. THERE IS NOTHING HERE.

THIS IS A PLACE OF LOST SOULS. A PLACE FOR THOSE WHO ARE HAUNTED BY THINGS LEFT UNDONE, UNSAID, AND UNFOUND IN THEIR LIFE.

A PLACE OF CONFUSION AND DESPAIR.

IT'S PRETTY, THOUGH.

...

YES. IT IS.

JII-CHAN, IF I'M NOT IN DANGER, WHY SHOULDN'T I BE HERE?

YOU SAID THIS TREE HAS ALWAYS BEEN HERE, WITH OUR FAMILY.

IT'S RIGHT THAT I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IT.

IT FEELS RIGHT.

YES, I KNOW. THAT IS OUR FAMILY'S CURSE. TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE GHOSTS THAT LIVE IN THIS PLACE THAN WITH THE LIVING WORLD THAT SURROUNDS US.

BUT WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU IS... THERE IS NO LIFE FOR YOU HERE.

ONLY GHOSTS.

AND A LIFE FULL OF GHOSTS IS NO LIFE AT ALL.

I WASTED MY LIFE UNDER THIS TREE, BRANDT. YOU CAN HAVE SO MUCH MORE.

YOU HAVE A LIFE IN AMERICA. A WIFE. LEAVE THIS PLACE AND GO BACK TO HER.

...

I DON'T KNOW THAT SHE'S THERE FOR ME TO GO BACK TO, JII-CHAN.

BUT HERE... THIS FEELS LIKE HOME.

I KNOW. THAT'S WHY I WASN'T ABLE TO LEAVE MYSELF.

I SUPPOSE I STILL CAN'T.

SO... WHAT NOW?

IF YOU WILL NOT LEAVE, WELL... NOW YOU LISTEN TO THE GHOSTS. IF YOU ARE INCLINED TO HEAR THEIR STORIES.

I CAN DO THAT.

YES, YOU WERE RIGHT.

I KNOW THAT SILLY BOY.

TO BE CONTINUED...

SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"